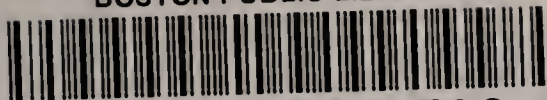


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THE
DUTY OF SOCIETY
TO THE
CRIMINAL CLASSES;
AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN THE

CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, MONTREAL,

ON SUNDAY, JULY 6, 1873;

BY

MARY CARPENTER,

(OF BRISTOL, ENG.)

MONTREAL:

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NOTICE.

The following Address was delivered extempore and without notes, and was not intended for publication.

It is printed at the request of the Rev. Dr. Corder, at whose desire it was delivered ; and in accordance with the wishes of other friends, who hoped that it might be useful in drawing attention to the importance of the subject, and the duty of society in regard to it.

M. C.

Boston, Mass., July 27, 1873.

THE DUTY OF SOCIETY TO THE CRIMINAL CLASSES.

MY FRIENDS,

Since our blessed Lord came especially to *seek out* and to save those who were lost, it is the duty of every one, in any way that lies in his power, to follow his example ; and not only try to save, but to seek out the lost. We must aid our fellow creatures as ourselves. The Apostle impresses on us the greatness of their interests by assuring us that we are all *members* one of another. In the business of life, we are apt to forget this great truth ; yet we cannot but acknowledge its obligation.

The reformation of offenders is essentially a Christian work. It is only in those communities which accept Christianity that efforts are made individually to reform the wandering. In the Old Testament, much is said about obedience to the Divine Law and punishments for sin, and the merciful offer of pardon to those who repent and forsake sin ; but little is written of the way whereby sinners can be reclaimed, and nothing (that I remember) of our duty to try to reform them.

In the New Testament, it is otherwise. The parable of the Prodigal Son stands forth as the lesson of God's pardoning love to the penitent sinner ; and it is expressly stated that " whoso converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins."

But it is difficult to know *how* this is to be done. There

is no such difficulty in the work of helping the destitute. This city shews peculiar devotion to benevolent work for our fellow creatures. I'verywhere I have seen hospitals, asylums, refuges, and orphanages; and have heard of the admirable manner in which the poor are relieved and their wants cared for, affording a refreshing contrast to the pauper system of my own country. But when I enquire into the condition of your criminals, I find them in a most mournful state. The buildings of your gaol are not externally unsightly; yet it is a moral plague-spot in your midst. For twenty years it has been known among you that no one is likely to enter that place without coming out contaminated. As from three to four hundred persons are generally confined there, consider how many must be annually sent out worse, and ready to prey upon the community even more than before, or to lead others into vice. Hence it is the interest, as well as duty, of society to endeavour to reform the erring.

Probably these evils have not come under the personal notice of any one here present. I beg now to urge it upon your attention, for it is surely the duty of every person to give personal consideration to the subject.

In former ages, although Christianity was professed, its teachings were not understood. Remains still exist in Europe, and even in England, which prove what were the feelings of society towards criminals. The most dreadful tortures were inflicted; and the abodes of the prisoners were not fit to enter for human habitations, but became hotbeds of fever and pestilence. From the time that our noble Howard brought these evils before the public notice, the worst features of prisons have been discontinued, but very much remains to be done. If physical torture is abolished, mental suffering remains.

In this city the interior of your gaol is such as to preclude even the possibility of benefit arising from the efforts of

those who desire to fulfil our Lord's injunction to visit the prisoner.

It is only by calling public attention frequently to these facts that a change can be produced. After Howard, Mrs. Fry and others had thus called attention, yet much still remained to be done. It was not conceived by most persons that there was any possibility of doing more than alleviating the condition of prisoners; no idea was entertained of real reformation; it was supposed that most prisoners would come out at any rate not made better than when they entered. Yet noble Christian workers have arisen who have proved the contrary. They must possess peculiar qualifications, including depth of Christian love, and an earnest desire to save souls. Such a one was Montesina, who effected wonderful reformation in the prisons under his care in Spain. But the most surprising evidence of the power of reformation was exhibited in Norfolk Island. It had previously been a perfect hell. It was supposed that it could only be kept in decent order by a constant military rule. Yet Captain Maconochie succeeded in introducing a complete change. I do not say that he succeeded simply by kindness of heart and appeal to better feelings; but he considered the real conditions of human nature; and by placing those under him in a right position, he kindled in them a desire to do better, and effected such a change as was perfectly astonishing; he proved that no one could be beyond the reach of hope, if right means were employed.

Our Heavenly Father employs the agency of his creatures to save the lost. There is no possible mechanism, or system of punishment, that can effect the object. Punishments may awaken regrets and remorse; but these are only the "sorrow of the world which worketh death." No one is prepared for heavenly life merely by the infliction of human suffering. It is only Christian sympathy that can kindle a wish to return: but this must be guided by wisdom and

knowledge. Such instances as those I have quoted have led men to consider how prison discipline may be so ordered as to lead to reformation. I wish therefore to lay before you the outlines of the system which has proved most successful. I entreat you to study the subject; because there will be no change for the better till public attention is directed to it.

In such prisons as that in your city, reformation is almost impossible. It is twenty years since your Grand Jury openly proclaimed that this was in a dreadful state. I will not describe it to you; but only say that not merely prisoners, but even lunatics are subjected to the same treatment. In this long period no effectual change has been produced. It is only by a thorough sense of duty in society that we can ever hope for improvement.

About twenty years ago the convict prisons in Ireland were in a dreadful state. There were 4,000 confined in the Irish prisons alone; in addition to those who were transported to the colonies. The females were extremely depraved. At last the refusal of the colonies to receive such immigrants compelled the Home Government to consider what could be done. Sir W. Crofton, with two other gentlemen, was sent to reform (if possible) the Irish prisons. First he improved the discipline; but that alone could effect but little. Then he shewed them his desire for their good. He spoke to each one personally, and shewed how their past life had led to nothing but evil. At first they could hardly understand how such a gentleman could take so much interest in such beings as themselves; but soon they found out what a Christian can feel for each immortal soul. He then shewed them that their future condition depended on themselves. He explained to them the laws of God; that if we sow to the flesh we must reap corruption; and that every breach of the Divine commandments must be followed by evil to the individual and to society.

He arranged such a system that their own efforts could restore them to society. At first he placed them in strict seclusion. When humbled and anxious to amend, he allowed them to enter into association with their fellows under strict supervision ; always, however, keeping them alone by night. *This is absolutely necessary.* If two badly disposed persons are in a cell together, the corruption they exercise over each other cannot be described.

Then he arranged another stage in which they entered upon associated labors, and were allowed to earn good conduct marks day by day. He called out their intellectual powers ; he provided teaching and labour every day : for success in each of which, one mark was earned. They could rise from class to class, and might now understand what was for their temporal good, though perhaps they might not have felt penitence before God. 'But we know not in what ways God works on the human heart ; and we may well hope that an inward change may accompany the change in outward behaviour. Yet how could he be certain that they *were* reformed ? When there is no exercise of free will, it is next to impossible to say what a man would be if free. Who can tell that his conduct would be good, if freed from control beyond the prison walls ?

It is a very difficult problem how convicts can be received again into the labour market. Who would like to employ them, when they might be disposed to do them some great injury ? Sir W. Crofton saw that he must prove that they were really trustworthy. He devised a most courageous and remarkable scheme. He determined to place them in comparative freedom. He resolved to locate them on a large piece of ground near the city, where they might live as ordinary laborers and cultivate the land. Several of these men were double-dyed convicts ; many had been in prison five or six times ; but he felt such confidence in some of them that he determined to try the experiment, with the

certainty on their parts that if they misconducted themselves, they would be returned to prison. Their term had not expired ; they had hope of considerable remission of their sentence ; but if they were not sincere, they knew they would be again confined. You would think this a sufficient motive ; but no one can tell how weak are the minds of convicts. The prisoners themselves were afraid of the experiment. Numbers of anonymous letters were sent to warn him. But he had studied the laws of human nature, and determined to persevere. He placed them in separate large corrugated iron huts, on the common, with only a few officials. They were fully warned not to attempt to escape. Ever since that time, from fifty to a hundred men have been on that common, working hard, not for their own wages, but as it were to repay to society what they had robbed. Very few have even attempted to escape, or have been returned to prison. Their conduct has been so satisfactory, that the public generally have been fully convinced that it was safe to employ them in the labour market. After a few experiments, their conduct was found so good that employers actually came to the prison to ask if there were not more men ready.

Thus the system of license, or freedom on "ticket of leave" began, and has continued in Ireland to be eminently satisfactory. The same was tried in England ; but it did not produce the same results, because there had not been the same preliminary training. When men were out on leave and committed crimes, they were not returned to the convict prisons ; and many have found their way to the prisons of the United States, and perhaps of Canada. But among those who had gone through the training of the Irish system, during a sufficient period, scarcely any have been returned. The utmost kindness has been shewn by every one of the officials. Lecturers have been appointed for them on moral and useful subjects. Roman Catholics, Episcopalians

and Presbyterians, had each their own religious instructors. Visitors also were encouraged to help. When the Social Science Association met at Dublin, we went over and inspected the whole proceedings; and all that we had heard was fully confirmed. This has been going on now for twenty years, and still (notwithstanding the removal of Sir W. Crofton, some years ago) with satisfactory results.

Meantime far greater difficulty was experienced with the women. When bad, these are infinitely worse than men. Their organization being more delicate, they fall more suddenly; and, with their character, every thing is lost. Yet even there a similar plan succeeded. When I visited them in 1861, those who formerly had given great trouble were seen earnestly endeavoring to learn; not doing as *little* as they could, but striving to do their duty, and earning marks like the men. But how were they to be restored to society? Who would receive such women into their households?

Most of them were Roman Catholics. Sir W. Crofton knew the Superior of a Nunnery who was a most admirable woman. He proposed to her to receive them, after they had gone through the other stages, under license, to be returned to gaol if disobedient. The noble ladies willingly received them. The kind and earnest way in which these Sisters devoted themselves to the improvement of these women was so successful, that the public believed them. Similar institutions were founded for the Protestant women; and there also good results followed.

It might be supposed that this could only succeed when admirable persons had the working of the system. But Sir W. Crofton found that it was not necessary to have persons of remarkable powers to carry out his plans. They were founded on human nature. The prisoners knew and understood it all. They knew that, if they fell, there was a power of recovery. Even the physical health of the prisoners became considerably better. The mind and the body go

together. From the commencement the doctors found that an entire change in their physique was perceptible.

The general system of Sir W. Crofton is now adopted in England under various modifications. At first there is great strictness of discipline, with low diet, &c. It is made a real punishment. Then they are placed in associated labour under strict supervision ; they are stimulated to do better ; and a small allowance is made for their work, to help them after their discharge.

In connexion with this system, it is necessary to have very strict police supervision. They must report themselves, that it may be known where they are, and whether earning an honest livelihood. It is only when society co-operates that this can be done effectively. If society had stood aloof, they could never have been restored. Nor is it safe and right to the innocent, that they should be allowed to enter into society, unless such careful arrangements were made as would prevent their annoying society again. Sir W. Crofton attaches great importance to the certainty of evil results following crime ; and also to society being willing to help them if they do right.

Let me give one instance. I visited a gaol in the United States, where a man cooly told the gaoler, "My age is 45 ; I am by profession a thief ; I began when a boy of ten or twelve ; I have been so ever since ; and I shall never do anything else." This man had been living in luxury preying upon others. Yet this actual cost was as nothing compared with the evil he had exerted upon others ; and he had now no desire to try to do better. When he was young, there were no Reformatories. He must have tempted other little boys, and got hardened by older criminals. Now in that prison there was every appliance for the comfort and advantage of the prisoners. There was excellent associated labour ; but when they saw all these conveniences and care, they did not appear at all abashed at their former conduct ;

but were daring and hardened and gloried in their shame. They had not been humbled by solitude and adversity. On the other hand, if those 600 prisoners had previously gone through the discipline of stern confinement and comparative suffering, they might have been penitent and returned to society benefited by discipline. It is not sufficient to wish to be humane. The time has come in which we must study the subject, for we have the positive example of good results.

Sir W. Crofton has left these prisons for some years ; yet the system goes on. A great man was needed to start it ; but not needed to work it. He has been labouring for the women in England ; a much more difficult employment. He established a refuge in which they should be still under government control ; as was the case under the good nuns in Ireland. This he called the Carlisle Refuge, in memory of the late noble Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. This has succeeded. Those who formerly were thoroughly bad, can now be placed out in service, and put into good positions of life.

Suppose that twenty years ago all the people in your gaol had been properly dealt with, and looked after on release ; what a difference in crime there would have been in this city and in the country round, at the present time. If you knew of a pest-house, which was spreading loathsome disease on every side, would you not feel, as it were, *compelled* to cause its removal. Yet is any physical complaint equal in virulence to the moral evil of this gaol ? Surely you should take this to heart, and see the importance of creating a powerfully operative public sentiment.

The complications of society are now so great that if we do not take the proper steps, convicts will revenge themselves upon us, even without intending it ; and we shall feel it sooner or later.

Last year a Congress assembled in London from all parts of the world, to consider convict discipline. I fear there were no representatives from Canada ; but there were more

than seventy from the United States. It was a new era in the history of the world that these representatives from almost every government in Christendom, should meet in earnest consultation. Different systems were discussed. Some indeed adopted in their prisons perfect seclusion even for eight or ten years. I believe this to be utterly untenable ; the mental torture is too great to be endured. But the greater part of those present fully agreed with the principles I have now explained. All were convinced that the reformation of the offender was an essential part of every system. We have no right to inflict all this punishment unless for the reformation of the offender. If convicts are reformed, society will be protected. It was unanimously agreed that humane measures should be administered with strictness and steadiness of discipline.

It was also a strong feeling in the Congress that when criminals are liberated, very stringent measures should be taken for the protection of society from relapse. Individuals should voluntarily assume the position of watching over these criminals. I could give you abundant instances of the good of such labour ; of the benefit of a kind word in season ; of the remorse and misery that have been suffered for want of it. The feeling was very strong in the Congress in favour of this work in aid of discharged prisoners.

These delegates have gone back to their respective countries, and disseminated these principles. An amount of consideration of this subject has been displayed which shews that the world is awakening to the Christian duty of attending to our convicts. " If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual should restore such a one in the spirit of meekness."

My friends, you must excuse my plainness of speech, but I exhort you most earnestly because I have seen the gigantic evils which have arisen, not from intentional unkindness, but from want of knowledge. Sins of omission produce as much evil as sins of commission. " Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me " ! Christ call all these miserable criminals his brethren, for we are the children of one Heavenly Father. May his voice penetrate the heart of each one of us, and may he say to all of us, " Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, YE DID IT UNTO ME."



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